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ABSTRACT
                The nature of effective staff development programs was
studied in both business and education with the aim of helping school
districts design alternative models of staff development programs for
teachers. In the first phase of the study, school districts and businesses
known for their reputations for staff development were asked to complete
questionnaires about their programs. Fourteen school districts and 9
businesses responded. Their responses showed the importance of staff
development and the frequency with which it was used. Four business and five
school districts having the most ambitious programs were selected for the
second phase of the study, in which in-depth interviews were conducted to
examine staff development in more detail. Interview findings suggest that
school districts need well-developed staff development tied to their visions,
missions, and goals. The effectiveness of staff development and support for
the sessions can be improved by relating them to one another. Incorporating
staff development into the school day may be advantageous, and evaluating the
effectiveness of these programs is essential. (SLD)

Policies and Practices in Staff Development
in Selected Schools and Businesses

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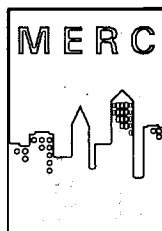
Policies and Practices in Staff Development in Selected Schools and Businesses

This research brief summarizes an investigation of the nature of effective staff development programs in both business and education. The goal of the research was to assist school districts with designing alternative models of staff development programs for teachers. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions.

* What are some of the topics that have been offered in staff development and training programs?

* Who makes the decisions about the content of staff development and training programs?

* When are programs scheduled?

* What kinds of delivery formats are used?

* How are staff development and training programs funded?

* How is the importance of staff development reflected?

* How are the programs evaluated for effectiveness?

The study was conducted using a survey research design in two phases. Data were gathered through mail questionnaires and telephone interviews. In Phase I, questionnaires were mailed to 22 school districts and 15 businesses. Five school districts and four businesses participated in Phase II of the study.

PHASE I

Methodology

The samples for Phase I of the study consisted of non-random samples of school districts and businesses in the nation. They were purposefully selected because of their reputations for having strong training and staff development programs, as evidenced by the literature review and/or by reputation. Questionnaires were mailed to 22 school districts, and 14 responded; 15 businesses received questionnaires, and 9 responded.

Findings

All of the schools and businesses responding reported that staff development and training were made available to at least 50% of their employees. Overall, those who supervised program participants perceived the training and development programs to be valuable. Respondents in 11 school districts and 6 businesses perceived such programs as "very important." Eleven school districts and 7 businesses indicated that employees perceived the programs as "very helpful to them."

The importance of training and development programs was reflected in a variety of ways. Responding school districts reported that employees were paid to participate in programs outside of work hours and that teachers were provided release time to attend programs during hours when school was in session. Businesses indicated that the importance of training and development programs was reflected by the organizations' expectation that employees participate in mandatory programs, and that such programs were linked to strategic plans.

The total number of days each year that employees participated in training and development programs varied among the respondents. Depending on the nature of specific programs the range of days was lower for school districts (2 to 7 days, annually) than for businesses (1 to 30 days, annually).

PHASE II

Methodology

Four businesses and five school districts representing those with the most ambitious programs were selected for Phase II, in which in-depth interviews were conducted.

A structured interview schedule was developed for use in conducting the interviews. Interview questions addressed 6 areas of interest related to the research questions:

* What was the content of staff development programs?

* What sort of schedules were used to administer their staff development programs?

* What type of delivery models were used?

* What source of funding was used to support staff development?

* What type of evaluation process was used?

* What value was attached to staff development programs by superiors?

At first, answers to the questions related to schools and answers to questions related to businesses were analyzed separately from one another. For each group, categories of responses were created and themes were noted. Then, answers to similar questions were analyzed across schools and businesses to note common categories and themes.

Findings

* *What are some of the topics that have been offered in staff development and training programs?*
  A total of 10 topics were identified, but only 2 were named by as many as 4 of the districts. While 10 different staff development topics were used by the school districts only 2, instruction and student achievement,

and diversity/multiculturalism, were named by 4 or more districts.

The businesses participating in the study offered a variety of topics in their training and development programs. These topics fell into 3 categories: management skills, leadership skills, and training in specific content and/or procedures.

• *Who makes decisions about the content of staff development and training programs?*
One of the school districts indicated that decisions about the content of staff development programs for teachers were decentralized, based on the goals of the schools. One district reported that these decisions were centralized, and three districts used a combination model that used input from both schools and the central office. Three models were used by businesses to make decisions about content. Decentralized decisions were those made by individual offices or departments. Centrally-made decisions about content were made one of two ways. In some instances, the Human Resources Department (HRD) decided the topics to be offered and designed and scheduled them accordingly. In some instances, top management decided the topics and enlisted the help of HRD in designing, scheduling, and delivering the programs.

• *When are programs scheduled?*
Both districts and businesses offered staff development opportunities year-round. During the summer, some workshops were scheduled for 3 or 4 days, and others were scheduled for a week. During the school year, sessions tended to be shorter, usually no more than 1 day in length.
While the school districts included summer workshops, all businesses in the study scheduled training and development programs during regular work hours.

• *What kinds of delivery formats are used?*
Large group sessions were the most frequently used and most preferred format by both business and schools. Other formats used by schools included mentoring/coaches, computers, and conferences.

• *How are staff development and training programs funded?*
Funding for staff development in the school districts was drawn from several sources; some from district staff development accounts, some from other central office accounts, and some from grant funds. All businesses in the study had centrally-budgeted funds for training and development programs.

• *How is the importance of staff development reflected?*
School districts reflect importance by offering incentives to teachers, including awarding of recertification points, college credit, and credit toward salary increases.
None of the businesses in the study offer direct incentives. Participation in programs is an expectation.

• *How are the programs evaluated for effectiveness?*
A variety of methods were used for evaluation including participant perceptions of effectiveness, follow-up with participants, supervisor ratings, and testing of participants.

Implications for School Districts

A key to maintaining such support for staff development is to tie well-coordinated staff development programs to the vision, mission, and goals of the school division. School divisions should continue to offer a wide variety of topics in staff development sessions. The effectiveness of, and support for these sessions can be improved by relating them to one another and by tying them to improved student achievement.

Through needs assessment or gap analysis models, school divisions should identify those topics needing attention district-wide. Schools should address identified needs that are unique to their buildings and that are related to the vision, mission and goals of the school and school division.

School divisions should consider a coordinated approach to using a variety of delivery formats. For example, a topic could be introduced in a large group setting. Follow up activities and sessions could be scheduled at individual schools through computer programs or through video. Implementation and on-the-job feedback could best be accomplished through study groups, coaching, and mentoring.

Incorporating staff development activities into the school day, is one way to provide necessary training without closing schools. School divisions should also consider increasing the number of contract work days for teachers as a means of providing staff development for teachers without sacrificing instructional time for students.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development programs must focus more on the degree to which the information is used on the job. Continued support for programs can be increased by providing evidence of how teachers use what they learned in order to increase student success.

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